



STATE OF MARYLAND

DHMH PRESS RELEASE

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MARYLAND AWARDED FEDERAL REAL CHOICE SYSTEM CHANGE GRANT TO CREATE LONG-TERM AFFORDABLE HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS

BALTIMORE, MD (January 17, 2012) – The Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) recently received a \$330,000 Real Choice System Change (RCSC) grant from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) to develop sustainable partnerships that will result in long-term strategies to provide affordable housing to people with disabilities. One of six grants awarded by CMS, the RCSC grants support the Obama Administration's "Year of Community Living" initiative, a partnership between the U. S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

"This grant will give Maryland another resource to meet a need for affordable, accessible housing for Marylanders with disabilities," said Dr. Joshua M. Sharfstein, Secretary of DHMH. "With this funding, we will be able to help low income people with disabilities find permanent housing that will allow them to live independent lives in their community."

Under the grant, DHMH created the Maryland Partnership for Affordable Housing (MPAH). The partnership, which is co-chaired by DHMH and the Maryland Department of Disabilities (MDOD), includes participation and leadership by the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and a variety of cross-disability agencies. MPAH will be responsible for developing the infrastructure, including coordination of services and supports between agencies, as well as an efficient and timely unit referral system, all of which are required to implement the Section 811 Project Rental Assistance (PRA) option in Maryland.

The RCSC award will help Maryland take advantage of recent legislative changes to the existing HUD Section 811 PRA program. For the first time, state housing agencies can apply for cost effective subsidies covering the difference between the HUD-approved operating costs of a project and the amount residents pay, helping create permanent supportive housing units for people with disabilities. The RCSC grant award also puts Maryland in a good position to obtain future PRA funds. HUD is expected to announce the availability of funding for Section 811 PRA funds by the end of February 2012.

The work of the MPAH builds upon previous collaborative efforts among State agencies, service providers and housing organizations to develop creative approaches to the meet the

housing needs of low-income people with disabilities. In May 2011, Maryland and the Weinberg Foundation announced a \$1 million grant that will help create approximately 25 affordable units for people with disabilities over the next two years. This public-private partnership, a collaborative effort between the Weinberg Foundation, DHCD, DHMH and MDOD, is one of the first of its kind in the country.

In 2006, DHCD implemented a Bridge Subsidy Program through an agreement with DHMH, MDOD, the Maryland Department of Aging (MDOA) and other service providers that successfully provided rental assistance for 112 people with disabilities with very low income.

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